

Mudflowers

Aley Waterman

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In Aley Waterman's striking novel *Mudflowers*, a woman finds love in the aftermath of her mother's passing.

Sophie, a struggling artist in Toronto, gravitates between two lovers: Alex, whom she has known since childhood, and Maggie, a poet with whom she has instant chemistry. The dynamic between the three is volatile. Maggie finds Sophie and Alex's past and present relationship unbalancing, and Sophie herself is unsure of who and what she desires. A startling plot twist forces her to confront her uncertainty.

Sophie gains closure, becomes more certain of her desires, and rekindles hope as she grapples with her mother's passing and finds connections with Maggie and Alex. She begins to live with renewed purpose and passion for her art; she grows closer to the people she cares about.

Sophie narrates, revealing a world that is intimate and intricate, with a constellation of mundane but vibrant details that ground the story in contemporary Canadian culture: the warm ambiance in the queer bars she visits; the lavish costumes at a beach party, after which she and her friends catch the last ferry to the mainland. Flashbacks to Sophie and Alex's shared childhood in St. John's are used to create a vibrant setting that complements the emotional arc of the main narrative, in which Sophie moves past sorrow toward tentative joy.

A powerful meditation on grief, betrayal, and how love endures and finds new ways to flourish despite challenges, the book begins at a meandering pace and gains urgency as it progresses. Much is said without conversation; people's body language, touch, and intimate encounters communicate what words often fail to convey. The character's conversations blur the lines between speech and thought.

Mudflowers is a timely, contemplative novel about the meaning of family and the various forms that love can take.

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